

We think that 8 percent is a fair and reasonable threshold. In fact, it matches the threshold set in the majority leader's bill under the food stamp title.

Under the majority leader's bill, able-bodied single individuals are required to work if they receive food stamps in 6 months of any 12, except that the Secretary may waive the work requirement for those in areas of unemployment exceeding 8 percent.

We agree. There ought not be any disagreement about that particular exemption. You cannot require someone to work if there are no jobs there. If there is 8 percent unemployment, then obviously it is very, very difficult in that competitive environment to accommodate people's job placement needs. And, as the majority leader does, so do we recognize and accept that fact and believe there are likely to be more options just as soon as the unemployment level drops but not until that time.

We have modified our exemption to the time limit to make it apply to those States with 8 percent unemployment. We hope that those on the other side of the aisle will not engage in a bidding war on the unemployment rate and raise it even higher. Welfare reform should not be a bidding war. It ought to be about putting welfare recipients to work.

I would like to make a few comments about modifications to the majority leader's amendment. While I have not yet read the modifications, if it is true that an exemption has been included so that women with children under 1 would not be required to work or, if they are required to work, the state must provide child care assistance, I hope my colleagues will take a close look at that provision.

A requirement to provide child care assistance to families with children under 1 is a real concern for many of us. This does not address the problem welfare mothers face. This is not realistic approach to a real barrier that women have to employment.

Only about 10 percent of welfare recipients have children under 1. But, about 60 percent of welfare families have children under 5. What does that mean? It means that about 50 percent of welfare recipients with preschool children, mostly young toddlers, would receive no day care assistance. What kind of child care fix would that be? No Senator should believe that somehow this addresses the problem. Obviously, it does not.

Child care is truly the linchpin between welfare and work. Under our Work First plan, we guarantee and fund child care assistance to mothers and recognize, if the parent's choice is between leaving children in the living room when they walk out the door and go to work and staying at home to care for their children, they are not going to leave the children at home. They are not going to allow their 2- or 3- or even 6-year-old children unattended for 6, 8,

or 10 hours. That cannot work. What happens to those children? Who feeds them? Who cares for them? Who protects them? Who disciplines them? If child care is not going to be provided for, then what real expectation is there that somehow these mothers are going to be forced to go out that door and expect the system to work? It is not going to happen.

Let us not fool anyone, least of all ourselves. If we are going to make this work, let us address the problems. Let us not ignore them. Let us recognize that there are fundamental challenges we have to face.

One challenge, in my view, that is very controversial, but it ought not be, is that it is also awfully difficult to expect anybody to leave that house if they take a minimum wage job, work 40 hours a week, have a family of four and find themselves still below the legal definition of poverty. What kind of incentive is that to go to work?

So if we are going to address real work and real expectations of trying to achieve greater participation in the work force, then it would seem to me only logical that we have to make work pay.

We are at one of the lowest points we have been in terms of the purchasing power of minimum wage earners that we have been since the establishment of the minimum wage. That is something we have to address.

We also recognize that Medicaid is not going to help at all if people are forced to give it up when they go to work. They have to be eligible for some kind of health care, or they are not going to endanger their children's lives or good health by saying, "Well, I am going to work. I am going to leave my kids in the living room. I am going to give up their health insurance because I want that minimum wage job that leaves me below the poverty line when I work 40 hours a week." That is not going to happen. So we have to recognize the importance of health care.

Finally, we have to deal with the issue of child care. I have children. The Presiding Officer certainly has, and he understands parenthood as well or better than anybody in this Chamber. And recognizing the need for child care is something that I hope we can all address when we come back. It is the linchpin, in my view, between welfare and work.

Mr. President, at this point, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators be added as cosponsors to amendment No. 2282, the Work First welfare reform plan:

Senators BREAUX, MIKULSKI, ROCKEFELLER, MOYNIHAN, REID, KERREY, FORD, CONRAD, DORGAN, DODD, KERRY, LIEBERMAN, BINGAMAN, BRYAN, INOUE, ROBB, EXON, MURRAY, FEINGOLD, BOXER, GLENN, AKAKA, LEVIN, FEINSTEIN, BUMPERS, LAUTENBERG, PRYOR, JOHNSTON, KENNEDY, and HEFLIN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, we are looking forward to a good debate when we return in September.

As the majority leader indicated, we had a good debate in the last couple of days. Something the distinguished Senator from Arkansas said earlier in the week is something I guess I will just leave on. He said that good legislators ought to be good educators. I hope that we can educate.

I hope we can lead a meaningful public debate about this issue, and not as partisans, but as people interested in solving a problem, and we can solve this one. I hope that we can have a good debate, recognize our philosophical differences, but deal with them in a way that will bring us to a resolution of a problem that has been with us for a long time.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be the period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CONVENTION CENTER AND SPORTS ARENA AUTHORIZATION

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of calendar 180, H.R. 2108.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2108) to permit the Washington Convention Center Authority to expend revenues for the operation and maintenance of the existing Washington Convention Center and for preconstruction activities relating to a new convention center in the District of Columbia, to permit a designated authority of the District of Columbia to borrow funds for the preconstruction activities relating to a sports arena in the District of Columbia and to permit certain revenues to be pledged as security for the borrowing of such funds, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the bill?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. President, the Senate will move shortly to take up H.R. 2108, the District of Columbia Convention Center and Sports Arena Authorization Act of 1995. This legislation, which passed the House of Representatives last Friday, has two purposes.